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CIA Plan to Declassify Secret Charter Told

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WASHINGTON — Officials of the Central Intelligence Agency have drawn tentative plans for disclosing the secret charter which has enabled the CIA to conduct operations outside the bounds of congressional or public scrutiny for more than a quarter century, it was learned Wednesday.

Drafts of unclassified versions of the agency's top secret operating authority have been written for ranking officials' review and will be studied further by its legal experts before they are forwarded to the National Security Council at the White House for clearance.

The move was viewed by some outside the CIA as an effort to mend an image tarnished by the Watergate scandal and to further Director William E. Colby's wishes that the agency appear more candid about its role.

No firm decision has been made on how or when such a document would be released, but agency officials have decided that at least the broad outlines of the secret charter should be declassified.

The real specifics of the CIA's operating authority are known to only a few senior members of Congress who lead committees charged with overseeing the agency. Even they

were unaware of the details until last year.

After exposure of efforts to use the CIA in the Watergate coverup and its assistance to the burglars of the office Daniel Ellsberg's psychiatrist, the secret charter was shown to Sens. Stuart Symington (D-Mo.) and John L. McClellan (D-Ark.). Neither was permitted to keep a copy of the document.

The secret charter is in the form of National Security Council Intelligence Directives, "enskids" as they are called, which have been written since the National Security Act of 1947 established the CIA.

The first of the directives is understood to have authorized the conduct of covert CIA operations abroad, and others to have approved activities bringing a major expansion of the intelligence bureaucracy.

Prof. Harry Howe Ransom of Vanderbilt University, one of the country's academic authorities on U.S. intelligence activities, has complained that expansion of CIA activity via the National Security Council Intelligence Directives amounts to a writing of laws by the few people who direct the country's intelligence apparatus.

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